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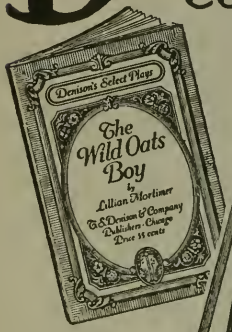

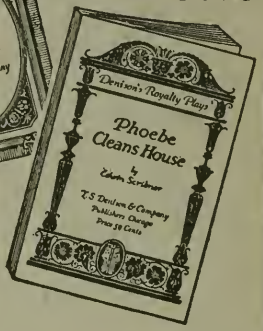

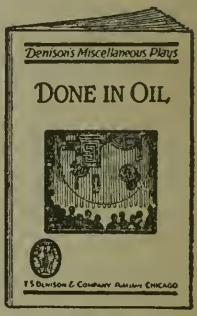

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T.S. Denison & Company · Publishers
623 South Wabash Ave. Chicago

THE WRONG SIDE OF EIGHTEEN

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By

ALDENA CARLSON

CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
Publishers

PS 635
.Z9C237

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The Wrong Side of Eighteen

SEP 17 1931

THE WRONG SIDE OF EIGHTEEN

FOR ONE MAN AND THREE WOMEN

CHARACTERS

(*In the order of their first appearance*)

MARTIN GAGE (MART)..*The returned admirer of other days*
MRS. SHERMAN.....*His old-time farm neighbor*
EVELYN MCKIM.....*Mrs. Sherman's granddaughter*
ADDIE SHERMAN.....*Mrs. Sherman's daughter*

TIME—*Late afternoon and twilight of an autumn day.*

PLACE—*The Sherman farmhouse somewhere in the Middle West.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Twenty minutes.*

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Mart is a slightly rangy, young-looking man of thirty-five, brown, rugged, and good-looking but not particularly handsome. He wears a plain dark suit, not very well-fitting, also an overcoat, with a broad-brimmed cowboy hat to suggest his fifteen years of residence in the far West.

Mrs. Sherman is a gray-haired, motherly, comfortable-looking farm woman of fifty-five, who has on a pair of spectacles. She wears a neat house dress covered with a gingham apron, with a dust cap on her head.

Evelyn is a rather pretty girl of eighteen, with the breezy, self-assured manner, speech, and appearance of the ultra-modern girl. She has on horn-rimmed spectacles, and wears an attractive tailored dress in some subdued color, with coat and hat to harmonize. Later in the play, she makes a quick change to a dress of a gay blue shade, with the same hat and coat.

Addie is a pleasant-faced country schoolma'am of thirty-three, who shows her age somewhat. She has a quiet, assured manner and gentle ways and speech, smiling easily, though she is far from gay. She also wears spectacles and is enough like her mother and Evelyn in height and build to make it possible for them to be mistaken for her or for her to be mistaken for one of them. She is dressed in a neat and becoming tailored dress, not in the height of style, with a plain coat and hat that show wear, though they are not shabby or old-fashioned.

PROPERTIES

For Mrs. Sherman, a pair of spectacles, a sauce dish, and a handkerchief. For Evelyn, a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, a bracelet, and a string of amber beads. For Addie, spectacles, a tin dinner pail, a pan of potatoes, and a paring knife.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

Up stage means away from footlights; *down stage,* near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left,* the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE WRONG SIDE OF EIGHTEEN

SCENE: *Dining room of* MRS. SHERMAN'S *midwestern farmhouse, along toward twilight of an autumn day. The room has two doors: one at left, leading to the kitchen and the back door, and the other at right leading to the living room and the upstairs. A curtained window, with neat, inexpensive white draperies, is up center. The room is plainly furnished, neat, and orderly. In the center is a medium-sized, rather old-fashioned dining table, with a cloth on it, partly set for the evening meal. Around the table are placed three straight-backed chairs. A similar chair is near the door at left, a little down stage from it, and two more chairs of the same kind are up right and left respectively. Up extreme left, against the back wall, stands a cupboard or old-fashioned sideboard, on which are arranged a few dishes. Up extreme right, near the right wall, is a mantelshelf, on which is a clock facing left in such a manner that its face is not clearly visible to the audience. On the shelf also is an oil lamp with a large white globe. On the wall above the shelf is a mirror of medium size. On the wall on the down-stage side of the right-hand door, hangs an old-fashioned telephone instrument. A little up stage from left door, on the wall hangs a row of hooks or wall hatrack. Inexpensive rag rugs in cheerful patterns are on the floor, and a few appropriate pictures are on the walls. Just outside left door, the corner of a kitchen table is barely visible to the audience. As it is well along toward twilight, the footlights and the flood lights are somewhat subdued, and as the play progresses, they become dimmer and dimmer until the point at which the stage becomes almost dark and* MRS. SHERMAN *lights the lamp.*

At rise of curtain, MART *is seated in the chair near the*

left-hand door, with his overcoat on and his hat on the floor beside him, while MRS. SHERMAN *passes to and fro between the cupboard and the table, bringing dishes and silver and arranging them on the table, and stopping occasionally in her work to finish what she is saying to* MART.

MART (*in a cheerfully reminiscent tone*). So Old Man Gunder is married again; is he? Well, I hope his third wife makes him spend his money a little easier than he did with his first. They said he wouldn't even get the doctor when she was dying. He sure was a tightwad! I worked for him a couple months. That's about as long as anybody could stand to work for him, I guess. Gosh, I ain't met anyone like him sence! You know, out West, people don't get that notion of stingeing on everything, even if they do have a hard time getting ahead. Guess it's because everything's built kind of on the big out there.

MRS. SHERMAN (*carrying plates to the table and arranging them*). Yes, it's different, I s'pose. It's different here, too, sence you was here. So many of the younger generation on the farms now, and they're different. Spending comes easier to them, seems like.

MART. Yes, ma'am, I s'pose that's so; though from what I hear, farming ain't much more paying here than it used to be. Guess you an' Addie's had quite a pull of it to keep things going as well as you have, Mrs. Sherman.

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, we ain't had it easy. I never could have got on without Addie. She was just through high school and had started teachin' when pa died. That's just after you went away, you know.

MART. Yeah. Well, I've had some pretty hard sledding myself. But I ain't never been sorry I pulled out. Of course if ma hadn't married again, or if she'd got a hold of anybody but that old Jake Barrow— Well, I felt pretty bad when I got word that ma'd died, but it wasn't no use then. An' I guess she didn't blame me much for going, the way I did.

MRS. SHERMAN. No, I don't think anybody blamed you,

Mart, for getting out and away—the way things was for you. And now that you've done so well, too—

MART. Well, yes. I ain't done so bad, looking at things from all sides. But it sure does seem good to see the old places! Had lots of fun this afternoon as I drove along, saying to myself, "That's So-and-so's old place!" Things ain't changed much back here. Don't s'pose folks have, either. Well, don't you think it's time for Addie to show up? You said—

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, it's past time for her to come home. She's been coming right home right after school these evenings sence it's begun to get dark earlier. Says there's so much she wants to get done, fixing things up before winter sets in. Old Ben's pretty slow about things.

MART. You don't have a reg'lar hired man now?

MRS. SHERMAN. No, we don't have one now, after the summer work's done. Not till cold weather comes and it gets too much for Ben to take care of the stock alone. We can't afford it, somehow. And Addie's always handy about looking after things.

MART. She sure is a wonder! But don't you s'pose I'd better set out to get her? Seems a shame, long's I have my car right here. Maybe I could get there yet before she started out, if she stayed late for something. Or couldn't I meet her along the way?

MRS. SHERMAN. Trouble is, as I've been saying, that she so often goes across pastures, especially when she's late. You'd better wait. She'll be along very soon now.

MART. Well, maybe I'd better wait. Might miss her, as you say. It's hard tellin', of course—

EVELYN *suddenly enters at left and crosses to table. She is wearing outdoor wraps, and is evidently in a hurry.* MART *rises, stands uncertain for a second, and then strides to her and takes her hand.*

MART. Well, here she is! Hello, Addie! Kind of su'prised to see me, eh?

EVELYN (*on her dignity, though not in the least bashful or embarrassed*). Pardon me, but I guess you're making a mistake!

MRS. SHERMAN. Why, yes, Mart. That's my granddaughter Evelyn. Amy's girl, you know. Amy was married to Walt McKim, and they both died when Evelyn was little, and so she's lived with us. This is Mart Gage, Evelyn. Used to live here when he was a boy.

EVELYN. Guess it must be years ago, if he thought I was Aunt Addie! Say, that's sure one on me! Guess I'll have to stop wearing these glasses.

MART (*trying to laugh off his painful embarrassment*). Guess the joke's on me! I sure beg your pardon! You see, we were expectin' your aunt, and I hadn't thought of there being anybody else here. And you do look like Addie —like your aunt! Don't she, Mrs. Sherman?

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, they all say she does; though I can't see it much myself, knowing them both so well.

EVELYN (*to* MART, *coquettishly*). Well, I don't think you'll have much trouble telling us apart when you see us together, Mr. Gage! At least, I hope not! Grandma, don't you s'pose it'd be all right for me to take Aunt Addie's amber beads if she don't get home before I have to go to the dance? I have to be over at Mabel's house at half past. Going to have supper over there.

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, Evelyn, I don't think you ought to take your aunt's things any more. You know how you lost that ring of hers, and I know she felt bad about that, too. She'd had it so long.

EVELYN. Oh, shucks! That old ring again! I don't think she minded much, at that. It was too young-looking for her to wear, anyway.

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, just the same, Evelyn, I don't think you'd better—

EVELYN. Oh, well, never mind! I'll go up and get ready, and maybe she'll get here before I have to go. Glad to have met you, Mr. Gage! Are you going to stay around here this winter?

MART. Well, no. I don't know just how long I'll stay. Couple of weeks, maybe. All depends.

EVELYN. Well, you'll sure find it dull around this neck of the woods! My, I do wish I was back in town, even if I did hate that poky old high school! Well, see you again, Mr. Gage. (*Crosses to right and exits, right, taking off her coat as she goes.*)

MART (*still considerably embarrassed*). So that's Addie's niece—the one she's put through high school.

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, Addie's done for her in every way. I've often told her she was doing too much. Seems girls nowadays don't appreciate what you do for them, the way they used to. Addie was so grateful to her pa for helping her as well as he could, so's she could get through high school. And she worked so hard and got through in three years, so's she could get to teachin' and start payin' him back. But Evelyn had a hard time getting through in the four years, it seems. But maybe it's harder now than it used to be. Addie says it prob'ly is. Anyway, there's so much more going on, and it takes so much more for clothes and things. Addie didn't have anything like the clothes Evelyn's had to have.

MART. Is she going to teach, too?

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, we had hoped she would, or else get into some other kind of work. But seems she don't get going at anything. Guess she's just out for a good time yet, though she's always complaining how dull it is out here in the country. She's young, of course.

MART. Yes, guess young people do find the country dull anywheres these days. Say, they just ought to try it out West—out in the cattle country! Still, it ain't so dull there, either, if you've got to hustle around for a living and keep things going for yourself! Well, Mrs. Sherman, I believe I'll just go out and buzz up that old coop of mine and spin down the road a bit and see if I can't get sight of Addie.

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, if you're bound to, then. But come right back, though, if you don't run across her, for

I'm going to have supper ready just about as soon as Addie gets here. And I should think you'd be hungry!

MART. Yes, ma'am, I'll be right back! That supper smells too good to take any chances, and I'm sure hungry, all right! I'd better take the south road. Hadn't I? That's the road she'll come. Ain't it?

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, that's the way she'll come, if she don't come across pastures. Now don't be gone long if you don't find her.

MART. No, ma'am, I won't. So long, then. (*Puts on his hat as he exits at left.*)

MRS. SHERMAN *follows him off at left, returning almost immediately with a china sauce dish, which she sets on the table. She goes slowly around the table rearranging several dishes in leisurely fashion, humming some familiar hymn tune. Simultaneously* ADDIE *enters at right in outdoor wraps, carrying her dinner pail. Evidently tired, she crosses slowly to left and sets her dinner pail on the table just off stage from left door, as she speaks.*

ADDIE. Hello, ma. (*Takes off hat and coat and hangs them on row of hooks, a little up stage from left door.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Hello, Addie. What's made you so late?

ADDIE. Oh, I stopped after school to help Phil with his arithmetic. He has such a time with square root. He isn't dumb, either; and he does try so hard and feels so bad about it. (*Crosses to center table.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Guess he takes after his ma about 'rithmetic. Don't you remember how she used to copy your examples, and how that Miss Geer caught her doing it once? Say, you've got company, Addie. Didn't you meet him?

ADDIE. Company? Him? Who? (*Moves around the table aimlessly.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, I don't s'pose it's any use makin' you guess. He said you didn't know about him coming.

ADDIE (*with the emphasis of mild exasperation*). Ma, who?

MRS. SHERMAN. One of your old beaux, Mart Gage.

ADDIE (*stopping very still for a moment*). Mart! Why, how—? What is—?

MRS. SHERMAN. He said he'd had it in mind to come for a long while. He's out in Montana, you know. Hadn't thought to come this fall, it seems, but then he decided to drive to Chicago for some stock show, and then he thought he might as well come on out here.

ADDIE. He's driving through, then?

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, in an old flivver, he said. But guess he could afford 'most any kind of car, from things he let out when he was telling about his place out there. And he's not the kind to brag, either.

ADDIE (*rather breathlessly*). Well, where—where is he?

MRS. SHERMAN. He was here half an hour or more, waiting for you, and I kept telling him that you'd be here any minute and that you'd most likely come across pastures, so's there was no use in him going to get you, like he wanted to. And then of course we got to talking about old times, and he sat here waiting. But then when you didn't come, he said he guessed he'd take chances on getting to the schoolhouse before you left or seeing you somewheres on the road.

ADDIE. Phil and I came across pastures. We saw a car on the south road. Do you suppose he'll come back—tonight? Did he—

MRS. SHERMAN. Oh, sure. He'll be right back. I told him I'd have supper ready pretty soon, and he said he was too hungry to risk missing it. Guess he's kind of excited about seeing you, Addie.

ADDIE (*trying to look skeptical, but unable to repress a happy smile*). Oh, do you think so? Guess when he's waited this long, he's not been in any special hurry! All these years, I mean.

MRS. SHERMAN. You've been hearing from him, though; ain't you?

ADDIE. Yes, I've been hearing from him. (*Sits at right of table, facing audience.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, I guess he's kind of excited about seeing you, all right.

ADDIE (*with a teasing smile on her mouth, but with tender eyes*). Wonder if his hair still stands on end on the top of his head—back here! (*Touches her own head.*) Did you notice, ma?

MRS. SHERMAN. No, I didn't notice. Guess he's been through enough to make his hair both stand on end an' lay down. Out west, in that wild country—

She is interrupted by the entrance of EVELYN *at right, running in with her wraps on, but with a gayer dress showing beneath. She is wearing the amber beads, also a bracelet.*

EVELYN. Oh, auntie, can I wear your amber beads tonight? I ain't got a thing to wear any more. This old blue dress ain't fit to be seen! Wish I could have something decent once in a while. Mabel's got the cutest slave bracelet, and earrings to match—

MRS. SHERMAN (*interrupting soberly*). Mabel's pa's made a lot of money this summer. Your aunt Addie ain't got a stock farm and a bank in town—

EVELYN (*interposing impatiently*). Oh, don't bring that all up again! I wasn't askin' for a trip to Europe! I only said I wished I had something decent to wear, for once. It don't cost a million to get a girl a few decent things to wear, so's she don't need to feel cheap every time she—

MRS. SHERMAN. Now, Evelyn! You know you get two and three new dresses for every one your aunt Addie gets for herself!

EVELYN (*scornfully*). Oh, for herself! Good Lord, what does she want with dresses? Never goes anywhere, anyway! Say, by the way, who was that guy that was here, grandma, and thought I was Aunt Addie? Where's he been for the last hundred years?

ADDIE (*painfully startled, rises*). Took you for me!

EVELYN. He sure did! Must have been some old beau of yours or something. Rushed up and grabbed me by the hand and called me Addie! Thought he'd kiss me next! You sure could have knocked me for a hill of beans! Not so bad-looking, either. Must be younger than you, Aunt Addie. Kind of hope he sticks around! Bet some of us kids could set him going, all right. It's kind of fun to see some of them older— (*The phone rings and she rushes to take down receiver and speak into mouthpiece.*) Hello! (*Pauses.*) Yes, I'm all ready, Mabel. (*Pauses.*) You can tell the world I am, and how! (*Pauses.*) All right! Goo'-bye! (*Hangs up receiver.*) I've got to hustle right over there! Can I wear these amber beads, auntie?

ADDIE. Yes.

EVELYN. Oh, and do you mind if I wear this bracelet? (*Shows bracelet on her arm.*) It don't look good on you any more, anyway. Your arm's too thin.

ADDIE. Yes, take it.

(EVELYN *rushes out, at left, without any good-byes, being too much in a hurry for them.*)

MRS. SHERMAN (*reproachfully*). Addie, I don't think you should let her have all your things. She ain't a bit careful of them. And she's got things of her own.

ADDIE. Oh, it's all right. What's the difference? (*Moves about and speaks listlessly as if she were suddenly unbearably tired.*) Ma, was that so—what Evelyn said—that he—that Mart thought—?

MRS. SHERMAN. That he thought she was you? Yes, he did, all right. You know, Addie, she does look like you, though you never seem to think so. But everyone else says so, an' I do see some of it myself; though of course she's so unlike you in her ways that I can't reelly see much likeness.

ADDIE. Yes, I suppose she does look like me—like me when I was eighteen years old—when Mart went away.

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, an' that's fifteen years ago. But of course he wouldn't realize—

ADDIE (*with a painful catch in her breath*). No, he wouldn't realize.

MRS. SHERMAN. No, men never do. And I don't s'pose anybody would when they've been gone away like that, so long.

ADDIE. No, I don't suppose anybody would realize. (*After a pause, evidently trying to regain her cheerful poise.*) Of course I used to write and tell him—in fun, you know—that I—that I was getting to be an old maid—that I'd probably have to wear something for him to know me by! Just in fun, you know!

MRS. SHERMAN. You knew he was coming, then?

ADDIE. I knew he was coming sometime, but I didn't know when. I was kind of hoping he'd not come till— Well, it doesn't make much difference, of course.

MRS. SHERMAN. Mart always did do things kind of unexpected-like, you know.

ADDIE. Yes, ma, has he—has he changed much? Does he look much older?

MRS. SHERMAN. Oh, he looks older than when he went off, of course. He was a boy then, and he's a man now. But you know the men in his family never do look their age. His father was all of forty when he was killed in that well cave-in, but he didn't look a day over thirty. Folks used to talk about how much younger he looked than his wife, and say that he should have married a woman much younger than himself. Kind of jolly and full of fun he was, you know, and I guess Mart's a good deal like him, for all he's been through. Lots of men stay young like that. Seems easier for them than for women. Not that it matters, goodness knows! We're as old as we are, no matter how we look, I guess.

ADDIE. Yes, but men have a way of expecting that women —that they should always stay young.

MRS. SHERMAN. Oh, of course. They do like a young face. And of course there's always plenty to be had. Funny part to me has always been that a man expects a woman to show her age in sense, but not in looks. Like's if you could

show the passing of the years on the inside of your head and not on the outside. But then, Addie, you needn't worry. Ain't many women's been through what you have and not looking any older than you. Ain't many girls that's done what you have for yourself and yours, and others, too, for that matter. (*She looks hastily into the mirror and then glances anxiously at the clock.*)

ADDIE. Yes, I know, ma. But I guess I don't look eighteen any more! I guess I— Ma, don't you want to go and comb your hair and change now? If Mart is coming back—

MRS. SHERMAN. Yes, I would like to get fixed up a bit. But the pudding's about done, and I ought to get the potatoes ready. Seems like I ain't had a minute's time all afternoon to get cleaned up.

ADDIE. I'll take the pudding out, and I'll start the potatoes. You go.

MRS. SHERMAN. Well, but don't you want to fix up yourself? He may be back any time, now.

ADDIE. I'll have time when you get back downstairs. I won't do much, anyway.

MRS. SHERMAN (*taking off cap and apron and dropping them on chair back of table*). Well, put these on then, so's you won't get all mussed up. I'll hurry. (*Exit at right.*)

ADDIE *puts on the cap and apron, crosses left, and steps off stage at left long enough to take a pan of potatoes and a paring knife off the kitchen table near the door. Then she crosses and sits in chair right of table, with the pan in her lap, and begins to pare potatoes, as* MART *enters at left. During the scene that follows,* ADDIE *never turns her full face toward him, but stoops over her work. Meanwhile the room grows gradually darker with approaching twilight.*

MART. Well, hello! Has she got home yet? I missed her, after all. Didn't see a sign of her! When did she get home?

ADDIE (*who has grown rigid for a moment, speaks in a*

somewhat muffled tone). Why—she—she ain't got home. You—didn't see her on the road?

MART. No! Why, I sure thought she'd be home by this time. Do you s'pose she can have gone somewhere?

(*Realizing* MART'S *mistake,* ADDIE *begins to speak as much as possible like her mother.*)

ADDIE (*after a brief pause*). Why—yes—she must have gone to Marcher's.

MART. To Marcher's? Why, I thought you said he was a widower.

ADDIE. Yes, he is, but he's got a girl in school, you know. Sometimes he comes for her, and then Addie gets invited home with them for supper.

MART. But wouldn't she let you know?

ADDIE. Oh, she'll prob'ly phone after a while. (*After a brief pause.*) Of course I don't know. She—she may still be coming in a minute—may have rid—rode with somebody.

MART. Well, of course if— Say, I met Sam Avery and stopped to talk to him. That's what kept me. He's sure changed a lot. Had some tough luck, I guess, losing his wife, and all. That girl of his, though—Frances—say, she's sure some young lady! You know I remember tossing her up into the haymow as easy as a ball that summer I worked for Sam! She was about three, then, and the darn cutest little thing! Sure couldn't toss her around now! Funny, ain't it, how fast they do grow up? Especially when one's been gone, like I have.

ADDIE. Yes, it's queer how soon they grow up, and the grown-ups get old. S'pose there'll be lots of folks you won't even know.

MART. Oh, I think I'll know everybody, all right! I didn't have any trouble knowing you, Mrs. Sherman. But you sure haven't got any older. And I guess you've had your share of trouble, too, from what Addie's wrote me, and from what I've heard in one way and another.

ADDIE. Yes, we've had our troubles—Addie and me. And

troubles don't make people any younger—not women, anyway.

MART. No, ma'am, I guess that's so. Say, what do you s'pose Sam's girl started kiddin' me about? Says she's got that doll yet that I gave her at Christmas time that year, only she's bobbed its hair! She sure was a tickled kid over that doll! And she sure can laugh about it!

ADDIE. Yes, Frances is a lively girl, and a very pretty girl. She takes after her mother.

MART. Yes, ma'am, guess she does. She sure is a pretty girl. Beats all how she's got so grown up! Well, what do you s'pose we'd better do about Addie? Do you s'pose—?

ADDIE (*after another pause and a glance toward the door at right as though she were listening for her mother's return*). Well, I tell you. Maybe it would be as well—if you didn't expect her to-night. You see, if she's gone to the Marchers' —she'll most likely stay till late. Sometimes she stays till he drives up town for the late mail, and then he takes her home.

MART (*taken aback*). She goes— She does that quite often; does she?

ADDIE. Yes,—she goes home with them pretty often. You see, the little girl's fond of her teacher, and—well, I don't know—but Fred's always been kind of partial to—to Addie. You know he wanted Addie before—he—

MART (*speaking in a hurried and confused manner*). Yes, I know that, but she—well, Addie's never wrote me about it, so I didn't know— You think, then, that Addie—that they—?

ADDIE (*also hurried and confused*). Well, of course, I don't know. Addie's never—never said anything. But he does seem— And of course it would be a good thing for her. She's always had to do for herself— And she'd be right near here, and—I—could stay right on here. And of course Fred's an awful good man—

MART. Yes, Fred's a good man, all right. A mighty fine man, all right.

ADDIE. And of course—Addie's—getting along in years, you know. I don't s'pose you'd even know her—

MART (*interrupting easily*). Oh, I guess I'd know her, all right! Guess I'd know *Addie*, all right! I remember her like it was yesterday! Well, Mrs. Sherman, guess I'll be off, then. Guess I'll drop in and see Sam a bit before I drive on in to town for the night.

ADDIE. Well, I'm awful sorry. Of course Addie might not be so late to-night. Won't you—won't you stay for supper and—?

MART (*evidently anxious to get away*). No, thank you, Mrs. Sherman, I— Much obliged, just the same, but I guess I'd better be off before that radiator freezes up! Well, good-bye, Mrs. Sherman. (*He half extends his hand as if to shake hands with her, but* ADDIE *seems not to notice and keeps on with her work.*) It's sure seemed nice to see you again and to talk about old times! And—greet Addie for me—

ADDIE (*in a forced voice*). But you'll—you'll come in sometime later; won't you? To-morrow evening, perhaps?

MART. Well, no, I don't think I will this spell, Mrs. Sherman. You see I kind of left in a hurry. Got to get back. No tellin' how them cowpunchers may get to actin' up while the boss's away! No, it'll have to be a flying trip this time! Good-bye. Sorry I didn't get to see Addie. Tell her good-bye from me. (*He hurries out at left.*)

For a moment ADDIE *continues at her work, then rises, puts pan of potatoes on the table, and rushes to the window up center, peering out. She turns hurriedly and goes to left door, placing her hand on the knob. Then she hesitates, crosses to the mantelshelf at right, looks mockingly at herself in the mirror, and finally bursts into low, mocking laughter. A moment later, she goes to the table, drops into chair at right of table, lays her arms on the table and her head on her arms, and weeps convulsively. As* MRS. SHERMAN *enters at right,* ADDIE *hurriedly raises her head and tries to stop crying and to conceal her tears. The stage is now almost dark.*

MRS. SHERMAN (*going to the mantelshelf and lighting the*

lamp as she talks). Well, what are you sitting in the dark for? Why ain't you lighted the lamp? Mart ain't come yet?

ADDIE (*in a repressed voice*). Yes, he came, ma.

MRS. SHERMAN (*sensing that something is wrong and growing more and more concerned*). Well, where is he now? Ain't he going to be here for supper?

ADDIE (*rising and removing cap and apron*). No, ma, he didn't stay for supper. He's gone over to Sam's. He used to work for Sam, you know, and used to think a lot of Frances when she was a little girl. He's gone over there. (*Lays cap and apron on the chair in which she has been sitting.*)

MRS. SHERMAN (*crossing to up center, behind table*). Well, ain't he coming back? What's his hurry to see Sam? Why, he said he was hungry for supper when he drove off to get you. He surely ain't going off like that after coming way out here from Montana to see you!

ADDIE. He didn't come to see me, ma. (*Starts right.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Didn't come to see you? Well, he sure acted like it this afternoon! What's the matter? What's happened?

ADDIE. Nothing's happened, ma. No, he didn't come to see me. He came to see somebody—somebody eighteen years old—somebody like Evelyn or Frances! He is still a young man—like his father when his father was killed. He ought to marry somebody a good deal younger than himself—somebody young and pretty!

(ADDIE *goes toward door at right, her face averted.* MRS. SHERMAN, *troubled and very anxious, starts after her.*)

MRS. SHERMAN. Addie, now, Addie! Supper's 'most ready! Don't be long if you're going to get cleaned up. Addie—you're not going without your supper! You ain't had anything to eat sence—*Addie*!

ADDIE (*in a broken voice*). Yes, mother—I'll—I'll be right down. Don't fret, mother. I'll be down—right away. (*Goes out slowly at right with bowed head.*)

(MRS. SHERMAN *stares after her in consternation, then slowly takes her handkerchief from her pocket and wipes her eyes. Shaking her head, she comes sadly down to the table and moves a few dishes on it in discouraged fashion, just as*—)

MART *suddenly bursts into the room at left, looking very much excited.*

MART. Mrs. Sherman, my car stalled down the road a bit, and while I was fixing it, Jim Miller drove by and stopped, and he says he seen Addie come across pastures quite awhile ago! You don't s'pose anything could have happened to her; do you?

MRS. SHERMAN (*bewildered*). Why, Addie's here! Why, you seen her, didn't you? She said—

Enter ADDIE *hastily at right. She crosses to* MART *with extended hand.*

ADDIE. Oh, how do you do? This is Martin Gage; isn't it? How are you? (*Shakes hands with him briskly.*)

MART (*gasping, with his face lighted up with joy*). Addie! Why, Addie! Why, you don't look a day older than when—But I knew that! Your mother ain't got a day older, either! Well, say, how are you, anyway?

(MRS. SHERMAN *looks mystified, but she acts discreetly.*)

ADDIE (*laughing tremulously*). Why, I'm fine, Mart. And that's awfully nice of you to say that; but I guess from what I hear—from Ev—from ma—about how you mistook—

MART (*embarrassed again*). Oh, *that*! Now, don't you go plaguing me about that! That was some joke on me, all right! But say, she does look like you, you know! That is, a little like you! They don't make them as good-looking in these days as they used to! Now, that's a fact! No kiddin' a-tall! Ain't that so, Mrs. Sherman? You'll bear me out on that!

(MRS. SHERMAN *nods vigorously and beams.*)

ADDIE (*laughing*). But you haven't changed a bit, Martin. You really ought to be going around with the young folks, still! You don't look any older than—

MART (*with a gesture of scorn*). Say, go on, now! Say, those jazzy youngsters now'days! Why, do you know, I'm scared of them! Reelly, now! They seem so kind of knowin' and so all-fired up and comin'! What'd I ever do with any of them? Turn 'em loose on my ranch, maybe, and let 'em run for a season or two. But, say, Addie, you sure do look good to me! And say, Mrs. Sherman, if that invitation to supper's still good, why, guess I'll stay. That is, if Addie ain't—if she ain't got some other plans? (*Looks eagerly and questioningly at* ADDIE.)

ADDIE. Of course not, Mart. Of course you'll stay.

MRS. SHERMAN. Sure you'll stay! I'll go and get the bread and things, and supper'll be ready in no time. You finish setting the table, Addie. (*She bustles off at left.*)

MART (*coming close to* ADDIE *and taking her hand*). Say, Addie, you sure do look good to me! Say, you know your ma—she tried to tell me you'd got lots older. Said maybe I wouldn't even know you when I saw you! Just as if I wouldn't know you the minute I set eyes on you!

(*He laughs triumphantly, and she echoes his laugh a little tremulously. If desired, the orchestra or the pianist may begin to play an old-time love song very softly behind the scenes at the beginning of* MART'S *last speech, continuing it until after the curtain has fallen.*)

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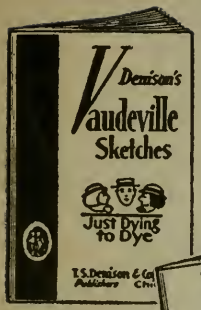

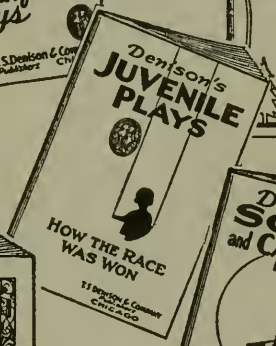

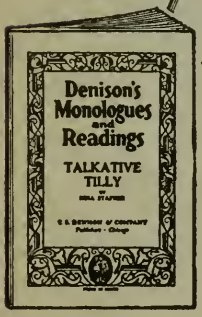

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